

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6986

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SS, MO, AL, SP

SUBJECT: SAHARA RUN-DOWN

1. RECENT SPANISH PRESS COVERAGE OF SAHARA SITUATION HAS BEEN RATHER CURSORY, REFLECTING SPAIN'S LACK OF DIRECT INVOLVEMENT. IN ADDITION TO INTERNATIONAL WIRE SERVICE PICK-UPS, HOWEVER, SPANISH PRESS HAS CARRIED FOLLOWING ITEMS OF RELEVANCE.

2. "FRIENDS OF THE SAHARA." A GROUP CALLING ITSELF "FRIENDS OF THE SAHARA" HAS BEEN FORMED IN THE CANARIES. IT REPORTEDLY HAS PROVIDED MEDICINES, CLOTHING AND OTHER SUPPLIES TO "SAHARANS WHO HAVE BEEN FORCED TO ABANDON THEIR HOMES IN THEIR STRUGGLE AGAINST THE INVADING MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS." DURING AUGUST, THE ORGANIZATION HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN A CAMPAIGN TO COLLECT 200,000 KILOS OF TOASTED, GROUND CORN ("GOFIO") FOR SAHARAN REFUGEES IN CAMPS ALONG THE ALGERIAN BORDER.

3. POLISARIO OFFICIAL HOLDS PRESS CONFERENCE. MOLLAUDH SAID, DESCRIBED BY THE PRESS AS A MEMBER OF THE SAHARAN ARAB REPUBLIC'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMISSION, HELD A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESS CONFERENCE IN OVIEDO, SPAIN, ON AUGUST 27. DURING

THE INTERVIEW, SAID STATED, INTER ALIA, THAT:

-- POLISARIO'S SUMMER OFFENSIVE WAS TURNING OUT WELL, AS THE RECENT OCCUPATION OF THE IMPORTANT BIR MUGRAIN BASE IN "NORTHERN MAURITANIA" AND THE LIBERATION OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE "OCCUPIED CITY OF ARGUB" CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED.

-- ALL OF THE "OCCUPIED ZONES" ARE UNDER CONSTANT ATTACK; GUERRILLAS ARE EVEN PENETRATING CITIES IN SOUTHERN MOROCCO. THE BU-CRAA PHOSPHATE OPERATION HAS BEEN SHUT DOWN SINCE NOVEMBER 14, 1975 AND THE CONVEYOR BELT HAS BEEN "DESTROYED" AT VARIOUS POINTS.

4. POLISARIO HOLDS CONGRESS. ACCORDING TO THE "FRIENDS OF THE SAHARA," A POLISARIO "CONGRESS" WAS KICKED OFF IN "LIBERATED SAHARAN TERRITORY" ON AUGUST 26. "DELEGATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD" WERE IN ATTENDANCE, INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SPANISH "PLATAJUNTA," A LEFT OPPOSITION COALITION, ALSO REPORTEDLY WERE IN ATTENDANCE. THE CONGRESS, WHICH WAS ADDRESSED BY THE POLISARIO'S SECGEN, "APPARENTLY LAROSI," REPORTEDLY CONTINUED THROUGH AUGUST 29. ALSO ACCORDING TO THE "FRIENDS OF THE SAHARA," THERE WILL BE A MEETING IN EARLY SEPTEMBER BETWEEN MOROCCO, MAURITANIA, AND ALGERIA TO DISCUSS THE SAHARA.

5. MOROCCAN MIRAGE DOWNED. ACCORDING TO "SAHARAN LIBERATION ARM" REPRESENTATIVES IN LAS PALMAS, CANARIES, A MOROCCAN MIRAGE F-5 WAS SHOT DOWN BY GUERRILLAS DURING AN ATTACK ON A MOROCCAN CONVOY NEAR ERGUEUA ON AUGUST 24. THERE REPRESENTATIVES CLAIMED THAT THE GUERRILLAS KILLED OR WOUNDED 70 MOROCCAN SOLDIERS DURING THE ERGUEUA BATTLE AND KILLED ANOTHER 20 AND WOUNDED 56 THE FOLLOWING DAY IN AN ATTACK AT MAGASED.

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